

Rules of the Game

All About Psionics (Part Three)

By Skip Williams



In Part One, we covered some psionics basics. In Part Two, we considered ways that psionic powers are similar to and differ from spells. This week, we'll review the list of conditions from the *Dungeon Master's Guide* and consider which of them interfere with psionic powers. We'll also explore psi-like abilities.

Conditions and Psionics

Anything that disrupts a creature's mental processes or concentration also prevents the use of psionic powers, including the *feeblemind* spell and the *brain lock* power. The character conditions listed below (refer to the condition summary on pages 300-301 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*) also keep you from manifesting any powers. The list presented here is substantially the same as the list provided in the Rules of the Game series on [spell-like abilities](#).

- Confused*
- Cowering
- Dazed
- Dead
- Dying
- Fascinated
- Frightened*
- Flat-footed
- Nauseated
- Panicked*
- Petrified
- Stable
- Stunned
- Turned*
- Unconscious

*Some [spell-like abilities](#) might remain available to the creature, see the notes that follow.

Additional Notes on Conditions

Some conditions merit additional comments:





Ability Damage or Ability Drain: Any ability damage or drain that renders you unconscious also renders you unable to use psionic powers. Creatures with **Intelligence**, **Wisdom**, or **Charisma** scores reduced to 0 are unconscious.

Reductions to the **ability score** that is relevant to your psionic powers lowers the save **DC** (if any) for those powers. If your relevant ability becomes low enough, you can no longer manifest powers.

For example, Kalill is a psion, so his relevant ability for psionic powers is Intelligence. If Kalill has an Intelligence score of 16, the save DC (if any) for his psionic powers is 13 plus the power's **level**. The maximum level for any power Kalill can learn or manifest is 6th. If Kalill's Intelligence score falls to 14, the **save** DC (if any) for his psionic powers is 12 plus the power's level and the maximum level for any power Kalill can learn or manifest is 4th. If Kalill knows any powers of 5th or 6th level, he does not forget them, but he cannot manifest them (nor can he learn any new powers of those levels) until he recovers the Intelligence he has lost.

Blinded: When you're blinded, you usually cannot aim targeted powers (unless you can touch the target) and you must specify the point of origin for area or effect powers (see *Aiming a Power* on pages 59-60 in the *Expanded Psionics Handbook*). You can still aim a ray or touch power, but you must use the procedure for attacking an unseen opponent to do so (see *Invisibility* on page 295 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).

Confused: If the d% roll indicates that you can act normally this round, you can use its psionic powers this round, otherwise, you cannot use psionic powers while confused.

Dazzled: The -1 **penalty** on **attack rolls** from this condition applies to any attack roll you make to use or aim a psionic power (such as a **touch attack** or **ranged touch attack**).

Disabled: If you use a psionic power while disabled, doing so causes you to lose a **hit point**. Unless the psionic power increases your hit points, you begin dying after you take the damage.

Energy Drained: If you take a look at *Complete Psionic* (page 100) or the sidebar included here, you'll find some rules for dealing with **negative levels**.

From page 100 of *Complete Psionic*:

Each negative level gives a creature a -1 penalty on attack rolls, saving throws, skill checks, and ability checks; deals 5 points of damage; and gives a -1 penalty to effective level (for determining the duration, DC, and other details of powers or special abilities). Additionally, a psionic manifester loses a number of power points equal to his original manifester level. Negative levels stack. Power point losses for each subsequent stacked negative level are calculated from the effective (lowered) level each time.

Furthermore, a spellcaster loses one spell or spell slot from the highest spell level available to him. If two or more spells fit this criterion, the caster decides which one becomes inaccessible. The lost spell becomes available again as soon as the negative level is removed, providing the caster would be capable of using it at that time.

Frightened: If you have a psionic power that allows you to flee from the source of your fear, you must use that ability to flee if you can't escape any other way. If you have several powers that allow you to flee, you must use the most efficacious one you have available. Your DM has final say on which power is most efficacious.

Grappled: You can use your psionic powers if grappled. Doing so requires a Concentration **check** (DC 20 + the power's level). A power has no verbal, somatic, or material components that grappling disrupts, but struggling in another creature's grasp tends to upset your mental equilibrium.

Panicked: If you have a psionic power that allows you to flee from the source of your panic, you must use that ability to flee if you can't escape any other way; see the note at frightened.

Pinned: You can use your psionic powers while pinned. Doing so requires a Concentration check (DC 20 + the power's level).

Turned: If you have a psionic power that allows you to flee from the foe that turned you, you must use that ability to flee if you can't escape any other way; see the note at frightened.

Psi-Like Abilities

In most cases, a psi-like ability works exactly like the psionic power it duplicates. If the power the psi-like ability duplicates is subject to **dispelling**, so is the power. Some psi-like abilities are **supernatural** and are labeled as such (marked Su). Supernatural abilities are not subject to dispelling, even when they duplicate psionic powers that normally are subject to dispelling.

Most psi-like abilities have a daily use limit (most often once a day or three times a day). A psi-like ability that is usable at will has no use limit at all, and the creature can use it as often as it likes; however, an at will ability still requires a standard action to use unless its description specifically says otherwise.

Psi-like abilities with daily use limits become available to the creature automatically each day. The creature doesn't need to rest or do anything to recharge itself. In this case, a "day" is any contiguous period of 24 hours. There is no set "recharge" time for a psi-like ability. Instead, the creature can use the ability a set number of times in any given period of 24 hours. See Rules of the Game: [All About Spell-like Abilities](#) for an example of how this automatic recharge works.

In Conclusion

That wraps up our discussion of psionics. As we have seen, anyone who can handle **D&D** magic can handle psionics.

About the Author

Skip Williams keeps busy with freelance projects for several different game companies and was the Sage of ***Dragon Magazine*** for many years. Skip is a co-designer of the **D&D** 3rd Edition game and the chief architect of the *Monster Manual*. When not devising swift and cruel deaths for player characters, Skip putters in his kitchen or garden (rabbits and deer are not Skip's friends) or works on repairing and improving the century-old farmhouse that he shares with his wife, Penny, and a growing menagerie of pets.

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